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TITLE: Holistic Counseling for the Minority AIDS

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ISSUE: The mental health issues surrounding minorities impacted with HIV/AIDS are multifaceted. Due to socioeconomic issues, various exposure category issues, physical and mental health issues, and the differing sexuality issues, traditional counseling approaches are inadequate when working with the minority HIV/AIDS population.

SETTING: HIV/AIDS therapeutic counseling, crises counseling, and case management, in clinical, agency or private therapy environment for minority clients.

PROJECT: To properly address the issues of working with today's HIV/AIDS minority client a Holistic approach to counseling and guidance must encompass 6 areas of focus in order to be adequate and effective. These areas include 1) Physical/medical health, 2) Mental/spiritual health, 3) Behavioral health, 4) Sexual/relational health, 5) Family/social health, and 6) Political/economic health.

RESULTS: In 1997-1999, clientele consisted of minority heterosexual and homosexual clients with and without substance abuse issues. After 4-5 sessions, 80% percent of clients reported an improved quality Of life, less fear, and confusion. Clients also reported having obtained a better understanding of HIV/AIDS, sexuality, and substance abuse along with much of their other life and environmental issues.

LESSONS LEARNED: Therapeutic and non-therapeutic experiences suggest that traditional counseling practices are not all encompassing and complete enough to successfully help the client with all facets of their life. Without a holistic approach to counseling for today 's HIV/AIDS minority client, counseling and case management can be ineffective discouraging and perhaps even damaging to the mental health healing process. These findings suggest that due to the socioeconomic cultural and environmental makeup of the HIV/AIDS client, all counseling and/or guidance professionals must be properly trained in holistic approaches to working with this population. Without proper mental and emotional health of the minority HIV/AIDS population, education, information and prevention efforts are in jeopardy.

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